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# MEMORANDUM

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To: Stephanie Griffin, P.E. Freese and Nichols, Inc.

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Project: Region C Water Supply Plan – Water Conservation Strategies

Subject: Water Conservation Public Education and Information

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- a. Purpose. The purpose of this memorandum is to summarize information gathered from 24 entities [Water User Groups (WUGs) and Wholesale Water Providers (WWPs)] relative to the implementation of Water Conservation Public Education and Information activities. The information was primarily gathered through telephone interviews and supplemented with data previously included in responses to a Region C survey conducted in 2007.
  
- b. Scope. Public Education and Information is one of the primary Best Management Practices (BMPs) recommended for water conservation initiatives in the 2006 Region C Water Supply Plan. In late 2007, the Region C Water Planning Group sent a comprehensive survey to all WUGs and WWPs requesting information on their water conservation initiatives. In February 2008, twenty-four of these entities were contacted to collect further information on their public education approaches and their willingness to cooperate on a common regional message. A listing of these selected WWPs and WUGs is included in Attachment A.

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- c. Overview. Public and school education programs inform water customers on water conservation approaches and reinforce this message with periodic reminders. The goal of these programs is to promote public awareness of the importance of water conservation in managing and sustaining existing water supplies. Tools to meet this goal include print, radio, and television advertising; direct distribution of literature; special events and seminars; and websites. School education programs provide water conservation curriculum material at appropriate grade levels.

## **2. SURVEY OF PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

The 2007 Comprehensive Survey was completed by 96 WUGs and 25 WWPs. Based on the survey results, the Public and School Education BMP have been adopted by 44 percent of the WUGs and 60 percent of the WWPs. Seventy percent of the respondents indicated that the Public and School Education BMP was somewhat effective or a very effective practice. Table 1 below summarizes responses from the 2007 survey, which requested information about public outreach programs.

**TABLE 1: 2007 SURVEY REPORTED PUBLIC EDUCATION AND OUTREACH PROGRAMS**

<b>Wholesale Water Providers</b>	<b>Public Outreach Programs</b>	<b>Annual Budget/Costs<sup>(1)</sup></b>
<b>City of Dallas</b>	Public awareness campaign, school programs, brochures, speaking engagements, special events and promotions, web site, water bill inserts	\$1,200,000
<b>City of Fort Worth</b>	Training for students, Customer Advisory Committee, bill inserts, promotions, Speaker's Bureau, gardening seminars, web site	\$200,000
<b>City of Denton</b>	Bill stuffers, television advertising, radio advertising	Not Reported
<b>City of North Richland Hills</b>	WaterWise, flyers	\$15,499
<b>City of Mansfield</b>	Smartscape classes and creek cleanups	\$2,300
<b>Rockett SUD</b>	Coloring books, stickers, brochure	Not Reported
<b>City of Waxahachie</b>	Pamphlets, reports, CDs, newspaper	Not Reported
<b>City of Weatherford</b>	Recycle/reuse education day, mail outs, inserts in bills	Not Reported
<b>North Texas Municipal Water District</b>	School programs, state education program, Water IQ	\$1,600,000
<b>Tarrant Regional Water District</b>	WaterWise, Major Rivers, Newspapers in Education, Wetland Water Reuse Module, SAVE WATER	Not Reported
<b>Trinity River Authority</b>	Public forums, meet with city staffs	Not Reported
<b>Upper Trinity RWD</b>	Brochures, website, book covers, tree planting program	Not Reported

<sup>(1)</sup> Annual budgets/costs do not include salaries, benefits, etc., related to personnel's time committed to these programs.

<b>Water User Groups</b>	<b>Public Outreach Programs</b>	<b>Annual Budget</b>
<b>City of Arlington</b>	Public service announcements, bill inserts, web site, newspaper, community groups	\$35,000
<b>City of Plano</b>	Indoor plumbing retrofit giveaways, school programs, seminars, display boards, banners, mailing inserts, web site	Not Reported
<b>City of Carrollton</b>	Residential irrigation inspections	\$6,000
<b>City of McKinney</b>	Web site, local television, mailers, billboards, and theatres	Not Reported
<b>City of Lewisville</b>	City website, television, kiosks, mail outs, book covers for schools, public education events	\$800
<b>City of Frisco</b>	Evapotranspiration (ET) program, elementary school programs, public events, web site, bill inserts, meetings	Not Reported
<b>City of Allen</b>	Water Conservation Rebate Program, school clubs, Adopt-A-Waterway Program, flyers, newspapers, cable television, AISD, presentation for Scouts and civic organizations	Not Reported
<b>City of Wylie</b>	Website, annual water report	Not Reported
<b>City of Azle</b>	Water plant tours, schools visits	Not Reported
<b>City of Chico</b>	Major Rivers program taught at 5th grade level at Chico Elementary School	Not Reported

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### **3. REGIONAL COOPERATION AND PROGRAMS**

Based on the 2007 surveys and the interviews, the water conservation messages from each regional program are mostly similar with a few differences. The City of Dallas, City of Fort Worth, Tarrant Regional Water District (TRWD), the Upper Trinity Regional Water District, the North Texas Municipal Water District (NTMWD), and others contribute to water conservation programs that messages reach outside their service areas and have a positive regional impact.

- a. *Water IQ: Know Your Water Program.* Water IQ is the water conservation program for the State of Texas, which is maintained by the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB). The Water IQ program is a public education program designed to inform the public about their water supply sources in terms of location, quantity, and current status. The TWDB acknowledges that some conservation programs were developed before Water IQ. The TWDB would like to see these programs partner with Water IQ so that Water IQ would provide an overall statewide conservation program that works with existing local programs.

Currently, the Lower Colorado River Authority, the City of Austin, the City of Lubbock, the City of San Angelo, the City of Tyler, the High Plains Underground Water Conservation District No. 1, and the NTMWD subscribe to the Water IQ program. Each subscriber to the program develops specific educational materials to inform their customer base about current and past issues, efforts, and developments within their water supply system. These educational materials range from brochures to television advertisements. Each subscriber has developed a user friendly website to promote educational efforts.

Specific to Region C, the NTMWD unveiled its Water IQ program in 2006 responding to the need to educate the public on their source of water and the need to use water wisely and efficiently. Currently, the NTMWD promotes its messages through various media outlets including a user friendly website ([www.WaterIQ.org](http://www.WaterIQ.org)), television advertisements, radio reads, print media,

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brochures, and an extension community outreach program. All of the educational messages are geared towards driving the consumer to the Water IQ website to learn more about conservation tips and information and knowing the current location and status of the District's water supplies. Information on the Water IQ website includes the District's conservation efforts, current water planning developments within the District, recent and current advertisement campaigns, a "Water IQ quiz," an interactive "Water IQ home," various other related water conservation links. In addition to the Water IQ program, NTMWD provides numerous speaking engagements to civic community, and school organizations.

- b. *Save Water Nothing Can Replace It Program.* In 2002, the City of Dallas through the Dallas Water Utilities developed its own regional public education campaign to promote conservation efforts within the city and its customer cities. The Save Water program promotes conservation efforts through the use of various forms of media including television, billboards, print advertisements, a user friendly website, classroom materials, and public speaking engagements. This program promotes water conservation by educating the public on ways that citizens can conserve water.

As mentioned above, the City of Fort Worth and the TRWD also participate in the Save Water program, and encourage their customers to participate in the program. Tarrant Regional Water District also promotes several other elementary school water conservation education initiatives directed towards grade school children. These initiatives include the Major Rivers program, the Newspapers in Education program, and the Water Wise program. These initiatives require the coordination and support of the City of Fort Worth and other cities for them to be taught in the schools. The Newspapers in Education program is a program that partners with the Fort Worth Star-Telegram to bring water conservation issues to the classroom with the newspaper. More

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information on these programs can be obtained from the following website:  
<http://www.trwd.com/Prod/Conservation.asp>

- c. The Upper Trinity Regional Water District has embarked on a customer city/user web based educational program (<http://www.utrwd.com/WaterConservation.htm>).

#### **4. ADDITIONAL COMMUNICATION WITH SELECTED WUGS AND WWPS**

Twenty four entities were contacted to gather more specific information on their public education approaches and their willingness to cooperate on common regional messages. The entities were asked a series of questions. These questions were designed to be as open-ended as possible to promote in-depth responses.

- a. Would you be open to partnering with other entities to convey a region-wide water conservation message? If so, what would you like that message to include?

Of the entities that responded to this question, all supported the development of a regional message. One respondent noted that several water conservation managers periodically meet to discuss water conservation issues. These monthly water conservation manager meetings were also discussed and reinforced at a recent Alliance for Water Efficiency workshop hosted by the San Antonio Water System.<sup>1</sup>

The following are specific responses from the entities surveyed:

- *“The North Texas Municipal Water District is actively involved in promoting a region-wide water conservation message through our Water IQ program. This program includes a dedicated website ([www.WaterIQ.org](http://www.WaterIQ.org)) as well as media advertisement (television, radio, billboards, print media, etc.) and various outreach events throughout the year. Use of Water IQ materials is available to our member cities and customers as well as others in*

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<sup>1</sup> Information obtained from a panel discussion at the March 13, 2008 Alliance for Water Efficiency workshop hosted by the San Antonio Water System.

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*the region who participate in the program. This program promotes the message that water is a finite resource and we can all make lifestyle changes to conserve it. It offers generic tips on how you can save water during daily activities.” North Texas Municipal Water District*

- *“Yes, include educational information on long term benefits and consequences if serious implementation is not applied.” City of North Richland Hills*
- *“Yes, in 2007, Dallas formed a partnership with Tarrant Regional Water District (TRWD) to expand its “Save Water” campaign beyond its service area borders. TRWD currently uses Dallas’ widely recognized “Save Water. Nothing Can Replace It” brand for its campaign. It was determined that the universal “Save Water” message can be used in any public outreach initiative, therefore we would like to see that message included as part of a regional effort.” City of Dallas*
- *“Yes, conservation information aimed at young people.” City of Azle*
- *“As a matter of fact, we already do. Last fall a small group of water education coordinators began meeting to compare notes. The group has grown to 16 with 3 water districts and several cities represented. We are currently working on elementary blocks of information regarding landscaping and irrigation systems.” City of Plano*
- *“Yes, a unified regional message should be specific to the needs of the overall region and not focused on a specific problem in one area. The message should be a basic water conservation message that is applicable for long term. The objective would be to get a consistent message to the public that will encourage a culture change to water conservation permanently not seasonal or drought driven.” City of Lewisville*
- *“Yes, Tarrant Regional Water District has a great message. I think that we should all use theirs.” City of Mansfield*
- *“Yes, we are currently meeting with Plano, Frisco, Rowlett, and others for producing a landscaping guide and program for all landscapes. As for regionally, there should be one consistent message.” City of Allen*
- *“Yes, a regional unified message could help educate our region to understand: where their water comes from, why conservation in North Texas is an important tool for water-*

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*use reduction, why their efforts will help plan for water resources with this region's growth, and how their indoor and outdoor habits can conserve and save them water."*  
*City of Frisco*

- *"(Currently) Coordinating with Plano, Richardson, and McKinney water conservation managers. Monthly meeting on water conservation and public message." City of Carrollton*
- *"Yes, we would be open to partnering with other entities to convey a region-wide water conservation message. We already are a member city of the North Texas Municipal Water District, and they publicize water conservation via television, radio, and print media." City of Wylie*

b. Would you be inclined to contribute financially to a region-wide program?

The overall responses to this question were positive. Although, concerns were noted on contribution amounts and in ensuring this program met the needs of the respondents' agencies. Other entities noted that a regional water conservation message could be developed by the North Central Texas Council of Governments, since the majority of the respondents already contribute financially to this organization.

c. In your opinion, which method of public education or public outreach would prove the most effective for the overall cost?

The responses to this question varied. The following are some of the responses:

- *"Both public education and public outreach are aimed to increase the knowledge of water and to hopefully increase the desire to alter the social behaviors of the consumer as related to water conservation and the wise and efficient use of the water supply. Both strategies, dependent on the educational/outreach strategies implemented, are quite extensive. North Texas Municipal Water District feels that both public education and public outreach are vital to changing the consumer's knowledge and use of their water supply." North Texas Municipal Water District*

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- *“Web pages and television ads.” City of Plano*
  - *“Building partnerships and coalitions with other water purveyors are the most effective outreach methods due to economics of scale. In other words, if several entities pool their economic, technical and grassroots resources, their efforts will yield exponential results.” City of Dallas*
  - *“Billboard advertisements and handouts/mailouts.” City of Lewisville*
  - *“Newspaper publications and web-site education.” City of North Richland Hills*
  - *“Education for young people that could be taken home and talked about.” City of Azle*
  - *“Print ads and media. Television messaging (i.e. cable outreach channels) do not reach everyone. Water bill inserts are helpful.” City of Allen*
  - *“Our free irrigation audit program has been one of our more successful education outreaches. Another success is home owner association meetings where we have the opportunity to speak to each neighborhood and personally educate them on the programs offered.” City of Frisco*
  - *“City focuses on well coordinated and planned public education events to large audiences, instead of a lot of smaller events.” City of Carrollton*
  - *“Interactive web-site for water conservation.” City of Wylie*

d. Please provide lessons learned from your current public education/information programs.

The responses to lessons learned were quite varied from irrigation issues to the importance of educating elementary school children.

- *“Through the implementation and yearly post campaign research of the Water IQ program, it is proven that when one increases their knowledge of the water supply, they are more apt to make a conscious effort to use water wisely and efficiently. Research*

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*has also shown that consumers relate their water savings to indoor practices and that a progression to savings outdoor is needed through future awareness efforts. Research also has shown that with repetitive messaging and a reminder of wise water practices, consumers will retain the awareness and initiate or continue water conserving practices. An awareness campaign whether water related or for other resources is an expensive but necessary strategy that must be ongoing to achieve results now and in the future.” North Texas Municipal Water District*

- *“Education programs work best when the content is elementary and easy to take action as opposed to heavy text brochures that go into a lot of detail. Many people are just too busy to absorb vast amounts of information; however, resources should be provided for those interested in digging deeper. Getting most people to do something small is better than overwhelming them and having them do nothing.” City of Plano*
- *“People just don’t understand the depth and the scope of the issue.” City of Mansfield*
- *“Always perform pre and post analysis on the effectiveness of your outreach efforts. If using outside consultants, hold them accountable for achieving results. Don’t be afraid to abandon a concept that does not work.” City of Dallas*
- *“It has to be continuous and ongoing.” City of Lewisville*
- *“Need to create several methods to get public’s attention and motivational devices are very important.” City of North Richland Hills*
- *“You cannot reach everyone...and most do not read the bill inserts. North Texas should target school-aged people.” City of Allen*
- *“We’ve found that many homeowners are not familiar with their sprinkler system timer’s settings and their landscape’s actual watering needs. One minute of outdoor watering wasted, or a matter of thousands of gallons wasted, contributes to a huge potential savings and reshaping of traditional thoughts on landscape management.” City of Frisco*
- *“Citizens seem more willing to be more cooperative when they have an understanding of the importance of water conservation.” City of Wylie*

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- *“We’ve found that many homeowners are not familiar with their sprinkler system timer’s settings and their landscape’s actual watering needs. One minute of outdoor watering wasted, or a matter of thousands of gallons wasted, contributes to a huge potential savings and reshaping of traditional thoughts on landscape management.” City of Frisco*

## **5. CONCLUSION**

- a. Public Outreach programs are in effect and are being actively pursued by most of the water providers within Region C. The major water providers have extended their programs to media outlets (radio, television, print, and signage) that reach the entire Region C area. The smaller and mid-size water providers generally utilize pamphlets, bill inserts, school programs, websites, etc. to convey their water conservation messages.
- b. At present, there is not a common, regional public outreach program. ‘Water IQ’ and ‘Save Water Nothing Can Replace It’ are programs that educate a great majority of water customers in the region. Most water suppliers agree that there is value in joining together to present a uniform water conservation message. Although an amount of money was not specified, there was some agreement regarding financial contributions.

Efforts are underway by the major water providers to further coordinate conservation public education and information activities and water conservation strategies implementation to achieve a common regional approach.

Many of the mid-sized and small water providers are attempting to further coordinate a regional approach for water conservation public education and information activities and the implementation of water conservation strategies.

Some entities suggested that programs administered by the North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) could be a possible vehicle to provide a common regional water conservation educational and information message.

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(Note: A component of the current Region C Planning effort includes interface with the NCTCOG's program known as Vision North Texas.)

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**ATTACHMENT A**  
**ENTITIES CONTACTED FOR FOCUS GROUP SURVEY**

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## WHOLESALE WATER PROVIDERS

- CITY OF DALLAS
- CITY OF DENTON
- CITY OF FORT WORTH
- CITY OF MANSFIELD
- CITY OF NORTH RICHLAND HILLS
- CITY OF WAXAHACHIE
- CITY OF WEATHERFORD
- NORTH TEXAS MUNICIPAL WATER DISTRICT
- ROCKETT SPECIAL UTILITY DISTRICT
- TARRANT REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT
- TRINITY RIVER AUTHORITY OF TEXAS
- UPPER TRINITY REGIONAL WATER DISTRICT

## WATER USER GROUPS

- CITY OF ALLEN
- CITY OF ARLINGTON
- CITY OF AUBREY
- CITY OF AZLE
- CITY OF CARROLLTON
- CITY OF CHICO
- CITY OF FRISCO
- CITY OF LEWISVILLE
- CITY OF MCKINNEY
- CITY OF PLANO
- CITY OF WYLIE